Strategy Research Project

RELEVANCE AND THE INTERPLAY OF DISTANCE AND INTENSITY IN CLAUSEWITZ'S TRINITY

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ABSTRACT

Clausewitz's theory of war has had an indelible impact on military thought. A prevailing understanding of Clausewitz's theory and, in particular, the trinity framework is that it applies only to wars between states. A definition or theory of war that only includes nation-states is outdated, given the rise in influence, communication and combat capabilities of non-state actors. The acceptance of the precept that Clausewitz's theory and trinity framework should be relegated to the rubric of state-on-state conflict informs the school of thought that deems Clausewitz's work to be, at best, less relevant in the discussion of current strategic issues. This essay posits a countervailing view. The nature of war is at the heart of Clausewitz's theory and that nature, as Clausewitz defined, is unchanged and applicable to non-state actors as well as states. The nature of war extends beyond just combat operations and, at its essence, is still dominated by the primacy of politics in its conduct. This essay explores an interpretation of Clausewitz's theory. It also addresses the need for states to reframe the strategic environment in order to effectively engage in war in a much more diverse geostrategic environment.

RELEVANCE AND THE INTERPLAY OF DISTANCE AND INTENSITY IN CLAUSEWITZ'S TRINITY

> Where more than twenty interpretations hold the field, the addition of one more cannot be deemed an impertinence.
> —Isaiah Berlin[1]

This essay outlines an interpretation through which Clausewitz's paradoxical trinity of passion, reason and chance remains relevant in discourse about war through the 21st century. It discusses a distinct, if not novel, interpretation of Clausewitz's framework that maintains its relevance with respect to the current proliferation of non-state actors on the national and international stage of war.

Up front, there are two caveats to this essay: First, though there is a great deal of discussion and use of the triangle analogy, it should not be inferred that war can be reduced to a mathematical theorem or equation. As explored later in the essay, a fixation on the inevitable geometric analogy that surfaces when discussing a *trinity* framework lends itself, and practitioners of the strategic arts, to become polarized on the issue of accepting or rejecting the utility of Clausewitz's theory. This acceptance or rejection is not always based on the merits of Clausewitz's actual assertions but, rather, is based upon the inference that his framework was intended as a mathematical truth. Once the practitioner makes that leap of abstraction, it is easy to dismiss the trinity as being too narrow in scope.[2]

Second, like the multitude of authors who have attempted to analyze Clausewitz's work, there is ample room for interpretation and the author's biases (e.g., personal and professional experiences) will no doubt impact conclusions. This essay is not, nor is it intended to be, a definitive interpretation of Clausewitz. Rather, this is

intended as an alternate lens through which to consider and continue the dialogue on one of the most complex human activities.

Why Clausewitz?: A Brief Analysis

War remains "…an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will"[3] and the ends of war are always connected to a political objective.[4] While relatively simple, this definition is most accurate and compelling because it cuts to the essence of what war is: a uniquely *human* phenomenon that attempts to orchestrate the use of force in a fluid and volatile environment to attain a goal. Clausewitz most eloquently captured this concept in his paradoxical trinity composed of passion, reason and chance.[5] His trinity includes the *unpredictability* of outcomes between the most important variables in the equation of war: humans. Therefore, Clausewitz's work is not intended to be *pre*scriptive, as it is impossible to predict the infinite number of permutations within human interactions. Rather, it is a *de*scriptive tool through which to assess the required relationships between the elements, leaving the specifics of addressing the war at hand to the strategists of the day. Other theorists, while making significant contributions to the field, either inadequately addressed or failed altogether to address one or more of these elements.

Jomini, on the other hand, did offer a prescriptive view of war. His theory of war provided a formula for success in its conduct, reduced war to a series of mathematical equations to be solved. Attempting to establish a *formula* to address war in a deterministic way minimizes the dynamic of a thinking, uncooperative enemy. Such an approach also ignores the roles of context and the physical environment in war. Attempting to overlay mathematical certainties onto such a dynamic phenomenon is the equivalent of asserting a *theorem* of war, not a theory. A theorem is defined by

Webster's as an idea, belief or method accepted as true *without proof*. A theory is defined as a coherent *group of general propositions* used as *principles of explanation, implicitly subject to testing and replication in the real world*. The distinction between the two concepts is important to understanding this author's perspective.

The utility of a theory is in its function as a framework to analyze an issue. It is a tool to organize thought on a complex issue. A theory is not an *answer* to the problem(s) it addresses. Particularly in the study of war, developing a definitive prescriptive answer is neither practical nor possible as it ignores the elements of notoriously unpredictable human interactions and chance from war. These elements cannot be removed and, consequently, theories that reduce war to a series of calculations ring hollow. Similarly, Sun Tzu's aphorisms on war do not raise themselves to the level of a cogent theory.

Although Sun Tzu's admonitions included the human element, his writings did not provide the practitioner a repeatable framework through which to analyze the questions of why wars occur and how to effectively use force as a tool. The latter is a fundamental element of success in war.[6] Moreover, Sun Tzu's assertion that defeating the enemy's strategy is paramount, while an interesting concept, is not particularly helpful as a theory for three reasons.

First, assuming knowledge of the enemy's strategy is readily available and reliable is somewhat quixotic. Sun Tzu himself asserted that all war is deception and, in doing so, seems to acknowledge his paramount task is an ideal more than a viable theoretical framework. Granted, Sun Tzu emphasized the need for accurate intelligence

through his emphasis on spies. However, he really provided no way of countering the reality that intelligence in war is normally scarce and rarely accurate.[7]

For example, throughout the build-up and most intense combat operations of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF), U.S. planners assumed Iraqi (i.e., Saddam Hussein's) strategy centered on the threat of military invasion by US forces. As both US military movements and political rhetoric were unambiguous, this seemed to be a logical inference. However, the actions of the Iraqi military upon the initiation of combat operations seemed counterintuitive and even bizarre at times. Only through post-conflict interviews with Iraqi military leaders was it discovered that US planners were not only mistaken in their belief that the US forces were Saddam's primary concern, but that the US forces were not even in the top *two* of Saddam's strategic concern's, those being an internal coup and the threat of a regional rival.[8] While there was arguably not much chance of an Iraqi conventional victory against the overwhelming force fielded against them, this example shows how easy it is to miscalculate the enemy's intent or concerns. By extension it illustrates the difficulty of "knowing" the enemy's strategy to address those strategic concerns, let alone attacking effectively his strategy.

Second, while obviously a consideration, the enemy's strategy is not necessarily the driving force behind "friendly" actions once hostilities commence. Were that the case, continuing with the OIF example above, US forces might have been expected to have spent significantly more time and effort locating and destroying aircraft the Iraqi's hid in an attempt to preserve their air power.[9] The Iraqi strategy, however, was based upon the flawed strategic assumption that the US would not force a regime change. From the US perspective, the Iraqi Air Force need only be neutralized in order to secure

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air superiority for the US forces. The US did not attempt to counter Iraqi strategy in this case because it was not necessary. The Iraqis achieved their operational and tactical goals of preventing the destruction of their aircraft, at the cost of surrendering arguably inevitable strategic victory to U.S. forces.

With hindsight it is easy to see such operations would have been a waste of U.S. resources, not to mention a violation of the principle of "objective" in war. Sun Tzu's emphasis on the enemy's strategy surrenders the initiative to the enemy and, by default, places friendly forces into a perpetual defensive mindset.

Finally, acknowledging it would be preferable to end conflicts without firing a shot, the essence of *war* involves the application of force, and that aspect is the central focus of Clausewitz's theory. To this point, the discussion has centered on the differences in these three theorists' views that are germane to the author's perspective. Where it appears Clausewitz, Jomini and Sun Tzu aligned was in their perspective that war was the exclusive purview of the state.[10] It is at this point, given the rise of non-state actors in today's international environment, the prevailing interpretation of Clausewitz's paradoxical trinity is found wanting, and the roots of the erroneously ascribed limitations are addressed.

A Closer Look at Clausewitz and the Trinity

The first step in addressing the continued validity of Clausewitz's theory and trinity framework for viewing and understanding war is to acknowledge the theory and the trinity are not one in the same. Often, when Clausewitz's name is invoked, practitioners jump straight to the framework without fully taking stock of the theory writ large and erroneously assume the trinity is merely an abbreviated version of Clausewitz's theory. This error is likely due to the difficulty of understanding the

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Hegelian dialectic in which Clausewitz wrote, and is either the direct result of the concepts being misunderstood or an over-simplification in an attempt at expedience. Clausewitz's theory on war is a necessarily nuanced discussion of the interaction between people, their emotions and their environment (physical and political) leading up to and during war. The trinity framework is a *complementary* visual device used to indicate there is a relationship between the three elements, but it is too simple and rigid to be applied independently.

At its most basic, Clausewitz's theory of war is that war is a fundamentally political act intended to bend an opponent to [our] will.[11] More than mere violence, war consists of calculations on both sides for entering into, conducting and concluding the conflict. These calculations make war a uniquely human phenomenon.

If we accept the common definition of war being an act of force between two belligerents, war is, by definition, impossible between a person and an inanimate object or idea. In the "war on crime," for example, the war (if one is actually being fought) is between the government (local, state and/or federal) and the *criminal(s).* The United States' current war is not "…on terrorism," but is against the members of Al Qaeda. Failure to identify the enemy creates confusion, both in the mind of the fielded forces, and in the minds of the public on whom they rely for support, resources and authority. While this discussion of how the word "war" is misused may seem mundane, it proves illustrative of a basic problem in understanding Clausewitz. This misuse of the word adds to confusion on the subject. The false analogies create apparent voids in the applicability of Clausewitz's theory and framework. In actuality, these "voids" are the result of attempting to assess phenomena other than war through the lens Clausewitz

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provided. If practitioners of the strategic arts are unclear or have a shifting operational definition of war, it makes the problem of understanding Clausewitz's theory an order of magnitude harder.

So, understanding the human nature of war, Clausewitz asserted there must be recurring or objective phenomena (e.g., violence, friction and chance) as well as subjective, changing phenomena (e.g., military forces, doctrine, weapons) that will affect war's conduct.[12] From that macro viewpoint came Clausewitz's paradoxical trinity. The trinity is not the theory; it is a conceptual aid through which he asserted his, as well as others', theory should be viewed. In any war, there will always be at least two trinities at work—one for each belligerent. Even in the case of non-state actors, all three elements of the objective trinity (passion, reason and chance) exist. The subjective bodies to which the trinity is applied will, however, be different.

Using Al Qaeda as an example, of a non-state actor engaged in war, it is clear there is a "governing" body that prescribes their vision and cause. This "*government*" is not elected and is admittedly a much looser conglomeration than a state government. It does, however, constitute the political leadership of the movement. The *people* in Al Qaeda's trinity are distributed across the global community. They are identifiable only by their espoused beliefs, which is why it is difficult to envision them as a coherent group. Finally, there is no doubt Al Qaeda has a *military leadership*. They are not uniformed and do not adhere to traditional state boundaries, but the combative component of Al Qaeda's trinity exists and its leadership is largely comingled with the political leaders.[13] Clausewitz spoke to the need for a theory of war to be balanced.

The framework of the trinity was intended to help the practitioner visualize the

components to be considered in creating or assessing a theory for a particular war.

By design, the trinity framework is somewhat simplistic; hence an understandable

tendency to gravitate to it as the theory and attempt to apply the framework for

purposes other than what is intended. An attempt to balance the trinity as either a

predictive or preventive tool misses the point of the framework.

As a practitioner evaluates a war, the utility of the trinity framework is in its role

as a reminder that the relationships between the subjective and objective elements of

the trinity are always in play. An unbalanced theory is not one that evokes an image of

anything other than an equilateral triangle. Rather, an unbalanced theory would be one

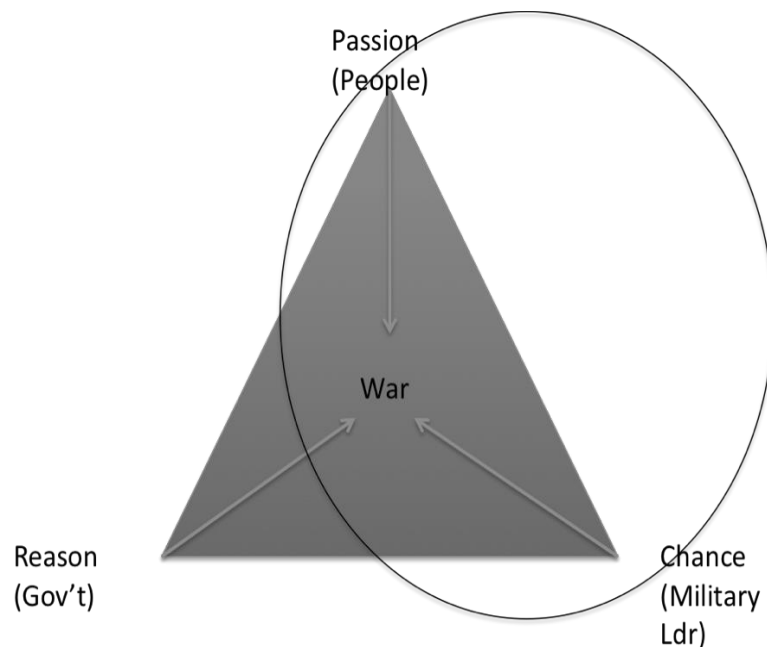that attempts to circumscribe the trinity, leaving out one of the elements (Figure 1)

Figure 1

The aforementioned interpretation will no doubt meet with criticism. A common criticism will likely be that the theory lacks "precision," which is a euphemism for "predictive capacity." That criticism would be accurate, but irrelevant.

It is not the role of theory to predict wars' causes; it is a framework to clarify thought on the subject.[14] Such a task is impossible to complete and is exactly what Clausewitz cautioned against when he admonished that "…establishing an arbitrary relationship between…" the elements of war would render the theory basically useless. He understood that elements of both the subjective and objective nature of war would change over time. The almost infinite number of permutations possible from the resultant interactions is impossible to calculate. Theory provides a descriptive construct within which to assess a complicated issue. It requires flexibility to deal with a dynamic environment with few constants—Clausewitz's theory meets that criteria. With this understanding of Clausewitz's theory and framework, there is room for interpretation, as to how these tools can be applied to the 21st century international landscape.

Given a theorist's perspective is necessarily impacted by the times in which they lived, the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars being the watershed/shaping events in Clausewitz's perspective, it is understandable Clausewitz would not extrapolate his theory to account for non-state actors in his discussion of war, any more than he would have been expected to discuss the impacts of air power on war. However, a definition or theory of war that only includes nation-states as actors is outdated or only marginally useful within a relatively narrow category within the rubric of conventional warfare.[15] Clausewitz's theory and trinity remain viable if the discussion includes the relationship and interplay between its elements that is not constrained by

the artificial application of geometrical laws that, at least this author, does not believe Clausewitz ever intended. In constructing his trinity framework, Clausewitz indicated the theory should "…maintain [war in] a balance…between the elements [of the trinity]…like an object suspended between three magnets."[16] (Figure 2[17])

People

War

Gov't   Mil Ldr
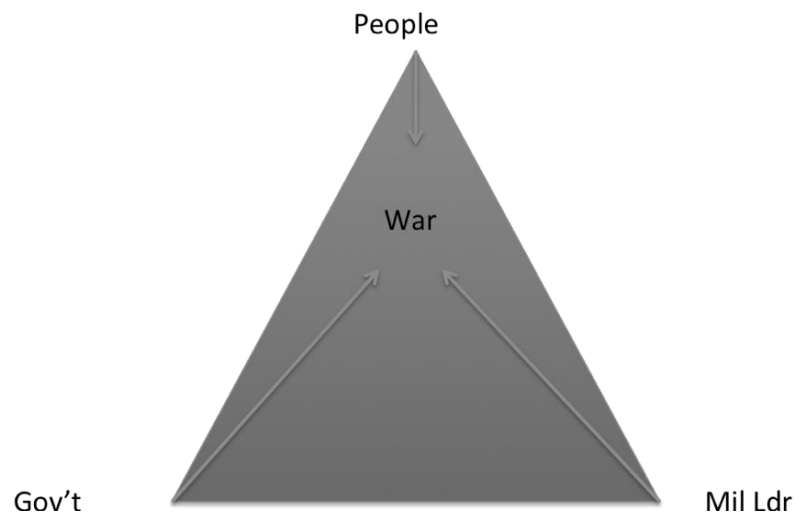
Figure 2

It is easy to discern why, when asked to place an object in the center of three related objects, the image of a triangle comes to mind. A triangle is the only geometric shape in which this situation can be depicted, so there is no significant problem with the shape's use. The first leap of abstraction occurs, however, in the type of triangle typically ascribed.

Clausewitz never specifically discussed the relationship between the elements of this trinity beyond the implied discussion of polarity. There is no substantive discussion of relative strength of relationship. It stands to reason, however, the tensors between the figurative magnets would impact how the relationship was displayed. Said plainly, the intensity/health of the relationships between the elements is important in at least a

descriptive, if not prescriptive capacity. Clausewitz, in his discussion of balance stated the theory, not the trinity, must be balanced; the trinity is a framework. That there is a relationship between the elements is all that should be construed as mandatory in Clausewitz's writings.

Representing the trinity as something other than an equilateral triangle, as is the common convention when represented graphically, permits a better description of the conditions under which states embark upon wars (i.e., from where the real impetus for war comes). This can be of assistance in framing the *type* of war, to include intra-state conflict or factions engaging in trans-national conflict.

Additionally, it is imperative to remember there are at least two trinities in play in any war, one for each belligerent. As the construct of treaties, international law, etc., are overlaid onto this construct, the resultant interaction(s) can look more like a prism than a mere two-dimensional triangle. As anyone who has ever peered through a prism can attest, the resultant refraction can make what was once clear appear distorted or indiscernible. This figurative distortion in using the trinity framework is merely magnified, not negated, when the number of factors is increased by the addition of non-state actors as significant players in the rubric of war. What is significantly different between the states and their non-state counterparts is the strength and distance between the elements of their respective trinities.

Interplay of Distance and Relationships

All violence, including "trans-national" terrorism, is a local phenomenon in that it occurs within a geographic area (e.g., states) and is typically aimed at correcting a grievance that is at least perceived to be within a government's purview to correct.[18] Therefore, it stands to reason that both the system (i.e., other states) and non-state

actors are attempting to influence the "reason" or governmental element of the trinity.

Representing this situation graphically and within the geometric analogy of a trinity

could be done through a scalene triangle in which the distance of the people from the

government and the military leader have "pushed" the impetus for war towards the

people. The French Revolution can be used as an example of this phenomenon.

Once nationalistic and revolutionary ideology took hold in revolutionary France,

war was no longer the exclusive purview of the aristocracy. Mobilization of the masses

not only changed the scope of war, but also its means and goals. *People's* interest,

whether ratified by a recognized state government or the governing body of some less

formal group structure, are at the heart of war. That is, the unequal distance pushes the

motivation, if not the full means of the state, out of the traditional "state-centric"

balanced espoused to be envisioned by Clausewitz (Figure 3).
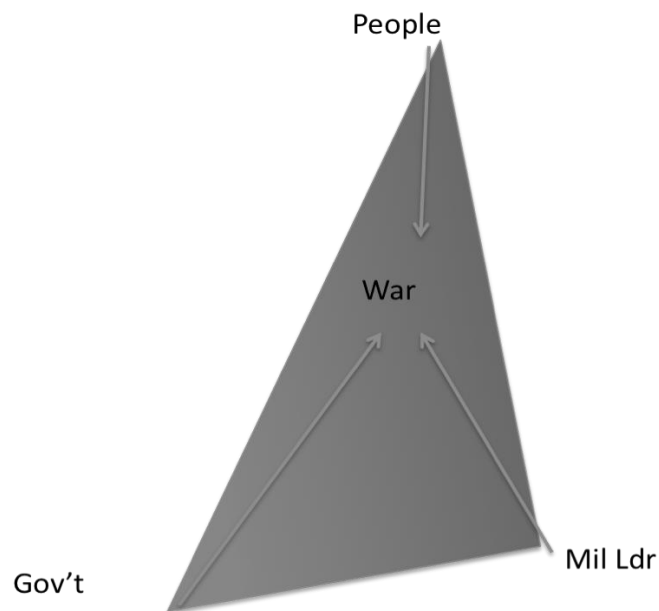

Figure 3

Rather than the people's passion rising and joining the state elements, the force generated is turned against the government. A more contemporary example of this dynamic is exemplified by the Egyptian opposition movement of early 2011.

After three decades of oppressive rule by Hosni Mubarak, there was a grassroots movement in Egypt to reform the government to a more democratic model.[19] Though the initial government response, both in rhetoric and action, was strong and defiant, it quickly became evident to Mubarak (and, subsequently, to the Obama administration) that the sitting regime could no longer hold power without physically crushing the opposition with military force. However, not only had the political leadership allowed the relationship between the government and the population to wither, the tensors between the government and the military leaders was also strained.[20]

While Mubarak himself could not be categorized as a "democratic" leader, extensive military-to-military ties with the U.S. helped cultivate more reform-minded leaders within the Egyptian military. Though the military remained loyal to the nation, the fissures in the relationship between the government and the military leadership were stressed under the pressure of forcefully repressing the opposition movement and it was evident ideological tie between the military leadership and the population was much stronger.   As a result, when violence ensued the military stepped in on behalf of the opposition (the people) and agreed to facilitate the peaceful transition to a new, democratically elected administration. The dynamic and resultant outcome[21] in Egypt stands in stark contrast to reform efforts in neighboring Libya.

Hypothesized to be inspired by the movements in Egypt and other nations in the region (e.g., Tunisia, Bahrain), Libyan citizens also attempted a regime change from the

grass roots level. Unlike Mubarak, however, Gaddafi maintained a much closer

relationship with his military and with portions of the population. Consequently, as

pressure rose to the point of armed conflict between the government and the opposition,

there was a significant rift within all three elements…the people, the government and

the military…resulting in the outbreak of civil war. The sitting government, having so

weak a relationship with the people, had no compunction with finding and using military

leaders who would use force to crush the opposition.[22]

Both in the case of Egypt and of Libya, the war in question was to occur within a

single state. There are those who argue against these cases as viable applications of

Clausewitz's theory, as they have inferred Clausewitz would not have envisioned a

scenario where the people were turned against the government.[23] The fact that

Clausewitz may not have envisioned this scenario does not preclude his theory from

being flexible enough to address it.

Clausewitz admonished that a viable theory must be flexible enough to handle

changes to the environment, yet structured enough to be of utility in making sense of

the elements. Said another way, the framework must be structured enough to frame the

issue, while not so narrow as to constrain a practitioner's thinking. Regardless of

whether Clausewitz actually envisioned a scenario where the people were pitted against

the government, the fact remains that such a situations exist and the test of durability for

Clausewitz's theory and framework is whether or not they are flexible enough to deal

with the change in the geopolitical situation; this author asserts they are indeed flexible

enough.

At its essence, war is unchanged regardless of the level (i.e., strategic,

operational or tactical) or the affiliation of the belligerents.[24] As it remains an act of force

to compel the enemy, the requisites required for wars between people and their

governments (aside from the basics of weapons, etc.) is enmity over an issue that is

perceived to be within at least one party's (normally a formal government) purview to

correct. In such a situation, all three elements of the trinity remain in play, however the

strength of the relationships may help explain the dynamics. As an example, consider

the dynamics of oppressive governments, as it pertains to transnational (non state-

sponsored) violence, visually represented in Figure 4.

Figure 4

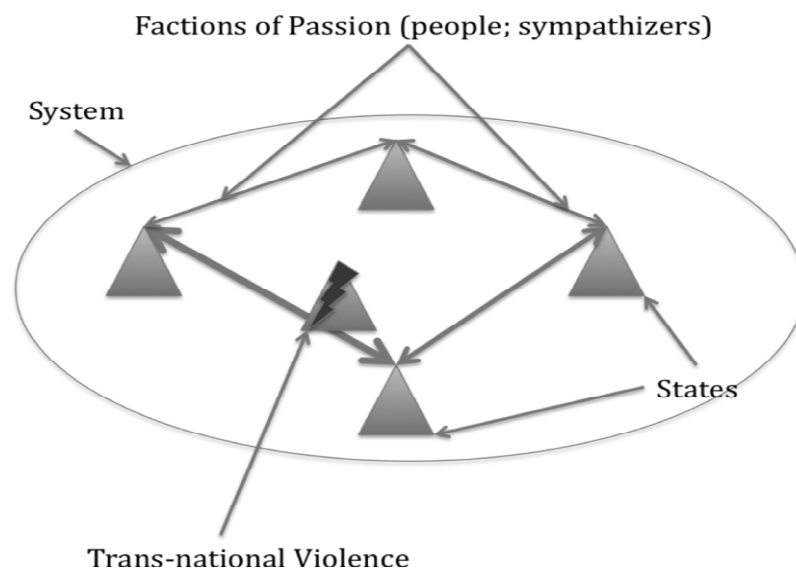Within states with oppressive governments, pressure and frustration of people

tends to rise as they are oppressively controlled. A common tactic for leaders in these

states is to allow the pressure to be relieved at some distant object, such as the

"American Satan," etc. This venting is typically cathartic, keeping the chaos within the

state of origin at an acceptable level. When weaponized, as Al Qaeda, has done, a

virulent strain of frustration can gather momentum and erupt in violence far beyond the original state borders, as sympathizers join the cause. As this spill-over rises in intensity (signified by the increasingly bold lines of in Figure 4), the violence can be elevated to a national threat. This places a state at war with a non-state entity and, beyond a mere theoretical discussion, presents conceptual and legal implications for such a war's conduct and termination.

<u>Implications</u>

First, while the new focus in the current geopolitical environment is the rise of the non-state actor as a full-up round on the stage of violence, state-centric conflict is still a real and dangerous possibility and needs to be carefully considered. The preponderance of this essay focused on non-state actors as a way of countering the argument against the relevance of the theory and framework. It is imperative that nations maintain the focus, resourcing and skill sets in their militaries to deal with inter-state war. Even for the U.S., arguably the sole superpower, miscalculation or significant changes in interests and/or alliances on the international stage could place the nation into what most deem an unlikely scenario of a large scale war with another nation. Most acknowledge that Clausewitz's framework is readily suited for that type of conflict, however, so we move to the discussion of the implications of wars with non-state actors.

It is likely 21st century wars, particularly from the U.S. perspective as the current sole superpower, will more frequently involve non-state actors or factions of states. Arguably the most contentious issues with the inclusion of war with non-state actors, in theory and practice, center on legal considerations. The body of law on *Jus ad Bellum,* law of war*,* is broad enough and has proven flexible enough to accommodate the inclusion of conflict with non-state actors. However, the prescriptive and detailed nature

of the body of law with regard to *Jus in Bello*, law in war (or operational law)*,* is

problematic.[25] The latter effectively handicaps states in combating non-state actors.

By definition, international law is different from other legal systems, in that it

concerns states or provinces rather than individual or lower-echelon groups. Non-state

actors, therefore, do not comply with the conventions of international law. [26] If states

are to continue to subscribe to and abide by the canons of international in fighting wars

with non-state actors, both interstate cooperation and clear *operational* definitions of the

applicable laws will have to be agreed upon.[27] Moreover, countering and/or engaging

non-state actor threats will likely require states surrender even more sovereignty as the

rules of international law expand. This expansion will likely have to include significant

changes to the definitions and understanding of what constitutes a lawful defensive

response.

Currently, the requisites under the United Nations Charter for a lawful defensive

response include necessity, proportionality and immediacy; within realm of necessity fall

the criteria to establish both opportunity and intent. As discussed earlier in the essay,

the very nature of non-state actors precludes much of the unambiguous warning states

at least believe they will receive from belligerent states. This translates to a difficulty

legally establishing their intent before an attack, as the precepts of international law and

the customs of state-to-state discourse are not set to recognize intent absent an overt

demonstration (which in most cases will be the attack). By extension it is problematic

for states to justify attacks as defensive and within the rights of self-protection. Taking

the war with Al Qaeda as an example, the organization had been vocal in their intent to

attack the U.S., but it was not until the attacks of September 11, 2001 that there was

any real international consensus that the U.S. was justified in engaging Al Qaeda in war. This was in spite of the fact they had declared war on the U.S. multiple times and claimed responsibility for or trained perpetrators of the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, the 1998 U.S. Embassy bombings in Africa and the 2000 attack on the USS Cole in Yemen. Even after the attacks, the U.S. and her allies have suffered a great deal of scrutiny, domestically and internationally, in justifying military operations. Problems arise largely because the operations necessarily have to take place within someone's sovereign territory, the majority of the population of which is not "at war." Additionally, there is a tendency to view states, typically having a conventional asymmetric advantage, as acting excessively when engaged with a numerically and technologically disadvantaged opponent.[28] From the discussion of issues with the entrance into and engagement in hostilities with non-state actors extends a natural discussion of the termination of said hostilities.

War termination with non-state actors will be problematic, as the element of reason normally ascribed to the government is not vested in a sovereign. The obvious question is "with whom does a state discuss terms and conditions of war termination?" Assuming such an agreement could even be discussed, there remains the issue of diplomatic engagement with a non-state entity—particularly a terrorist group. Avoiding the loaded term of "negotiate," any attempt to bring to terms such a group, that has not officially authorized any single person or body to enter into discussions on their behalf, is destined for failure. The logical conclusion is that many of these wars may increase and decrease in intensity, but are unlikely to come to a definitive end in the classic sense of state vs. state wars. There is precedent for extended conflicts that go "cold"

and rise and fall in intensity, the Korean Conflict probably being the most notable. However the point is, again from a US perspective, these wars will be extremely unpopular. They will fly in the face of what can arguably be called the American way of war, and both the people (passion) and government of the state (reason) will therefore heavily resist entry into them.

Conclusion

While obviously not a panacea, there is still a great deal of applicability for Clausewitz's theory and the attendant trinity framework in the 21st century. Providing a clear operational definition of both the phenomenon of war, as well as understanding the purpose of the trinity framework (a complementary visual device) and theory (a far more complicated and nuanced discussion) are the first steps to applying this body of knowledge. Admittedly, the current geopolitical scene is more volatile than when Clausewitz created his theory. However, the continued value of the trinity is in its ability to focus the strategic practitioner on the few "constants" that are present in war. The technological changes and the legal constructs of the 21st century have no doubt brought the ability to engage in violence to new heights and distributed that ability across a much wider swath. Also, the interdependence of the 21st century world has sped up, if not complicated, the consequences of war. However, these are all issues of warfare; the nature of war remains stalwart. As such, the elements of passion, reason and chance also remain and their attendant contextual factors must be addressed strategy, regardless of the scope or the nature of the participants.

Endnotes

[1] Isaiah Berlin, "The Originality of Machiavelli" [originally published as "The Question of Machiavelli" in *New York Review of Books*, 4 November 1971, 20-31] in Isaiah Berlin, *Against*

the Current: Essays in the History of Ideas, ed. Henry Hardy (1979; reprint, New York: Penguin, 1982), 79.

[2] Alan Beyerchen, "Clausewitz: Nonlinearity and the Unpredictability of War", International Security, Vol. 17, No. 3 (Winter, 1992-1993), pp. 59-90. Accessed 12 Dec 2010.

[3] Michael Howard and Peter Paret, *On War* (Princeton University Press, 1989), 75.

[4] Note: The use of "political" here and throughout the essay is synonymous with "civic" or "pertaining to the people," as defined by the dictionary, and is not necessarily associated with a state government.

[5] Refer to page 89 of On War for the discussion of the trinity in which Clausewitz ascribes these attributes to the people, the government and the military leader, respectively. The trinity formed by the recipients of the attributes is also referred to as the "subjective trinity" and the terms for the respective points in the trinity will be used as synonyms throughout this essay.

[6] Samuel B. Griffith, *The Art of War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971, 77.

[7] Michael Howard and Peter Paret, *On War* (Princeton University Press, 1989), 89.

[8] Refer to the Iraqi Perspectives Project: A View of Operation Iraqi Freedom from Saddam's Senior Leadership for a detailed account of the miscalculations and misunderstandings between the US and Iraqi leadership.

[9] Ibid. The aircraft were being preserved only because the Iraqi leadership did not believe regime change would truly take place, and the Iraqi Air Force would be needed to stave off regional competitors when the US forces withdrew.

[10] Referenced here is the common interpretation of these theorists. A more liberal interpretation of Clausewitz on this matter will be covered later in the essay.

[11] Michael Howard and Peter Paret, *On War* (Princeton University Press, 1989).

[12] Throughout the essay, there are statements to the effect of what Clausewitz "asserts" or "says." These statements are this author's interpretations and/or inferences. It is impossible to know exactly what Clausewitz intended or might have revised his writings to read had he finished his works.

[13] The author is not arguing that the military arm/operations of Al Qaeda are always in concert (i.e., unity of effort or command). The discussion here is only to assert the objective elements of the trinity exist within the construct of this non-state actor.

[14] For a more detailed discussion of how Clausewitz's argument of polarities assists strategists in organizing their thoughts, refer to Martin Van Creveld's essay, "The Eternal Clausewitz*"* in Michael I. Handel's *Clausewitz and Modern Strategy* (Frank Cass and Co., 1986).

[15] Sebastian Gorka, "The Age of Irregular Warfare: So What?," Joint Forces Quarterly, no. 58 (3rd Quarter 2010): 32.

[16] Michael Howard and Peter Paret, *On War* (Princeton University Press, 1989), 89.

[17] The placement of any of the trinity's elements at the apex of the triangle is not intended to indicate a level of importance. As stated earlier, the elements are all required and what is important is that the relationship between all three be considered.

[18] Ibid

[19] At the time of this writing, the final outcome of the opposition movement remained unclear. The use of "democratic" in this case is not intended to imply the opposition desired a Jeffersonian democracy patterned after the U.S.

[20] Hosni Mubarak was a relatively contentious ally in the region. Internationally, the U.S. was accused of turning a blind eye to the oppressive leadership and tactics of his regime out of self-interest. Likewise, the Mubarak regime suffered legitimacy problems with the population and was widely viewed as a puppet of U.S. policy in the region.

[21] Still speculative at the time of this writing, but the immediate escalation of mass violence appears to have been averted.

[22] It is also worth noting Gaddafi made extensive use of mercenary forces against Libyan citizens in his efforts to retain power.

[23] Jack Smith, The Essence of Warfare at the Strategic Level, US Army War College Strategic Research Project, 2002.

[24] See Jack Smith, The Essence of Warfare at the Strategic Level, US Army War College Strategic Research Project, 2002 and Harry Summers, On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War (Presidio Press, 1982, Novato, CA).

[25] Refer to Michael N. Schmitt, "21st Century Conflict: Can the Law Survive?", Melbourne Journal of International Law, Vol 8, pp 443-475, 2007 for a more detailed discussion of this legal issue.

[26] Among other issues, the lack of a valid "sovereign authority" makes it impossible for non-state actors to engage in a just war within the rubric of international law. The three requisites for a just war are authority of the sovereign, just cause and rightful intentions.

[27] The language within Jus in Bello may need to be broadened (i.e., made less specific) in order to allow flexibility in its application. Gaining consensus in this area will not be easy, and it is not the author's intent to gloss over this area, but the legal details are beyond the scope of the essay.

[28] Michael N. Schmitt, "21st Century Conflict: Can the Law Survive?", Melbourne Journal of International Law, Vol 8, pp 468-471, 2007